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RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 04 RUSSELS 001548

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SUBJECT: BOUCHER DISCUSSES CENTRAL ASIA WITH EU

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would require careful political management. Interlocutors also told Boucher that while Kazakhstan welcomes Chinese investment, it is wary of Chinese immigration as a result.

Kyrgyz Republic: Deteriorating political situation and creeping "Islamization" worry EU

¶13. (C) Lucas and Morel expressed concern that if the political situation continues to deteriorate in Kyrgyzstan, others in the region may draw the conclusion that the closer a country moves toward democracy, the more unstable it becomes. Morel told Boucher he met with President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in mid-March, and that Bakiyev seemed fairly pleased with himself for having outplayed the opposition. Morel sensed that there was a credible growing opposition movement led by former Prime Minister Kulov, but that Kulov was more interested in overruling Bakiyev than he was in leading the charge for constitutional change. Pushing Kulov forward, Morel said, is former Interior Minister Omurbek Suvanaliyev. According to Morel, Suvanaliyev recently claimed he could influence 40 percent of the country's secret police forces. Morel expressed concern that Suvanaliyev and Kulov have strong ties to Moscow and had made several secret trips. Morel said the opposition was dismissing Bakiyev's appointment of opposition leader Almaz Atambayev to the role of Prime Minister as a "pawn." Boucher stressed the need for a coordinated message pressing Kyrgyzstan to settle down (not exploiting the current uncertainty for short term gain), to revise the constitution, and to move on.

¶14. (C) Although the Parliament is largely outdated, Morel conceded that at least there is one in place. Morel expressed deep concern over the "creeping Islamization through social pressure," noting that women were being paid to wear the hijab and citing the recently proposed legislation legalizing polygamy. Bakiyev joked about the proposed legislation, but did nothing to block it. The

legislation was later blocked by the Parliament.

¶15. (C) On assistance, Maldonado told Boucher there would be an 80 percent increase in assistance, totaling 40 million euros a year. Commission assistance will focus on rural development, the social sector, energy, and political infrastructure and transparency. Boucher briefed EU interlocutors on our progress preparing a Millennium Challenge Account threshold program for the country.

¶16. (C) On hydro power, EU interlocutors shared Boucher's assessment that the Kyrgyz do not have a plan and expressed doubt that the project might become a "white elephant." Boucher stressed the need for the Kyrgyz to reform the energy sector first.

Tajikistan: Cautiously optimistic

¶17. (C) EU interlocutors generally shared Boucher's assessment and were cautiously optimistic about Tajikistan, but agreed that issues of democratic reform and corruption continue to plague the country. Lucas relayed that the Tajiks are nervous about political idealization from Afghanistan. Lucas also expressed concern over drug trafficking. Lucas said that border control and drug trafficking would be "stepped up" in the new EU strategic framework, with an emphasis on better coordination with all regional players, including Russia. Maldonado told Boucher there would be a \$14-15 million euro increase in the regional border management program.

¶18. (C) The Commission told Boucher it would spend 17 million euros per year on rural development, agriculture, land reform, and public finance management (linked with an anti-corruption campaign) during the next programming period. Two Commission programs were closed, however, due to corruption.

¶19. (C) Lucas agreed with Boucher that the lack of democratic reform continues to be a problem. EU interlocutors stressed the need to make clear to the Tajiks that the OSCE must be allowed to do its job, and said the litmus test for democratic reform would be the state of non-governmental organizations. Nonetheless, Lucas said that Tajikistan seems to be moving in the right direction and appears to maintain a lively civil society.

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